

Are You Ready for Takeoff?

Leslie Miller

Whether you are traveling across the country or across the world, business travel can be hectic and exhausting. The web sites featured in this article provide helpful hints and services to make your next business trip more comfortable and convenient. As a result, the next time you hear the static voice of a flight attendant instructing you to ensure your “personal belongings are stowed safely in the overhead compartments or under the seat in front of you” and “that your seat backs are in an upright position,” you can sit back and relax, knowing that all of the details at your next stop are taken care of. You should also check out this month’s “Product Snapshots” on p. 46 to learn about more products that can make traveling easier.

WEB SITES

According to BizTraveler.org (<http://www.biztraveler.org>), the average business traveler spends three years in flight, two years traveling to and from airports, 28 months waiting for scheduled flights, 11 months waiting for connecting flights, and three months searching for a parking space. The goal of BizTraveler.org is to make business travel easier by “helping business travelers understand today’s travel marketplace and providing them with information about all aspects of travel.”

BizTraveler.org contains a “Road Rules” area that includes helpful tips for making your business trips go more smoothly. Tips are organized into categories such as air, car rental, hotel, health, safety, travel and technology, and travel expenses. This site even features a tip of the day. For example, one recent tip of the day said, “Be nice to ticketing and gate agents. They have great authority over enforcing rules and making exceptions. You are more likely to get your way if you are calm and ask for their help.”

BizTraveler.org also includes a “News You Can Use” section, which features travel news and bulletins. For example, you can learn about recently published industry studies and the latest legislation regarding travel topics. You can also access travel alerts issued by U.S. State Department and international organizations.

At BizTraveler.org, you can participate in travel surveys, check out the weather in your destination city, and access a currency converter. If you encounter a problem while you are on the road, simply fill out BizTraveler.org’s complaint form. BizTraveler.org will then forward your complaint to the appropriate department in the company with which you have a complaint. BizTraveler.org will also forward your complaint to federal and local organizations that have oversight on specific sectors of the industry.

The Business Tr@veler Info Network (<http://www.business-trip.com>) features links, tips, news, and reviews for business

travelers. In the incredibly thorough and helpful Internet Travel Resources section, you can find pages and pages of links to other travel-related web sites. For example, you can find links to the official web sites of airlines, hotels, car rental agencies, credit card agencies, consolidators, and travel agencies.

The Business Tr@veler Info Network also includes tips to help you use today’s newest technology to make your business trip easier. For example, in the Downloads section, you can find links to shareware, freeware, and demos of products related to travel, such as airport identifier software that you can use to find out which airlines serve your destination airport and which two- or three-letter code identifies that airport. In the Palm section, you can learn about various travel products, such as language and currency translators and expense tracking programs designed for the Palm OS. You can also use the links on this page to purchase the products that you find useful.

At The Business Tr@veler Info Network, you can find links to recent news on business travel, detailed information about destination cities, and recommended books for business travelers. You can also sign up to receive an e-mail message when there are updates to The Business Tr@veler Info Network.

BizTravel.com (<http://www.biztravel.com>) provides one-stop shopping for your business trip. You can book a flight, reserve a hotel room and rental car, and get information about your destination. Navigating BizTravel.com is a bit chaotic, but the provided information and services make the web site worth the work.

In addition, BizTravel.com enables you to develop a personal archive of past trip itineraries and preferences. BizTravel.com then uses these preferences when you plan your next trip. This feature is especially helpful if you often travel between the same two cities—for example, corporate headquarters and a branch office.

BizTravel.com also provides an automated system to upgrade your reservations after booking. You can instruct BizTravel.com to automatically provide frequent flyer upgrades and seat preference checking and booking. You can also use your Biztravel.com account to summarize and categorize frequent traveler’s air, hotel, and rental car booking in one place.

BizTravel.com provides 24-hour-a-day customer service integration through e-mail, online chat, and call-back service. BizTravel.com also provides real-time messaging-to-pager alerts for flight status and airplane gate assignment in the destination city. In addition, you can use the Traveler Toolkit to find out the weather in your destination city, to read tips about how to make your business trip go more smoothly, and how to find a good meal after you arrive in your destination city.

The News and Views section of Biztravel.com compiles the news and presents it in short, concise paragraphs. You can also read feature articles and columns about recent developments in the travel industry. For example, you can read about how technology is changing the business traveler.

NETWORK RESOURCE

The free web service TechRepublic (<http://www.techrepublic.com>) provides "career insight, community interaction and customized content" to enterprise computing professionals so they can be more successful in their careers. At TechRepublic, you can access news, industry analysis, and feature articles written by outstanding contributors from throughout the IT profession. You can also take advantage of services such as software downloads, career management tips, forums, job directory, peer directory, vendor directory, auctions, e-commerce offerings, event listings, and electronic newsletters. According to

NetWare Connection reader Phillip Rasmussen, "The TechRepublic web site is very valuable both professionally and personally."

NETWORK GAME OF THE MONTH

EverQuest: The Ruins of Kunark is an online fantasy role-playing game from Verant Interactive that encompasses a world with its own diverse species, economic systems, alliances, and politics. EverQuest is one of the most popular games on the Internet. Case in point: No matter what time of day I logged in to the EverQuest game site, more than 20,000 people were playing the game. Most of the time, the count was closer to 40,000.

When you begin EverQuest: The Ruins of Kunark, you choose what kind of character you want to be. You can become a noble knight, an elfin thief, a dwarfish merchant, or any one of various other characters. However, by choosing your character, you are also defining your quest. As you make your way through the game, you must learn skills, earn exper-

ience, and acquire treasures and equipment to accomplish your quest.

EverQuest: The Ruins of Kunark has excellent 3D graphics, and you must have a graphics card that supports 3D acceleration to play the game. The world of EverQuest: The Ruins of Kunark stretches through several continents and includes cities, villages, and wilderness. These environments run on the client end of the software to avoid any slowdowns in game play.

Along your quest, you will explore dark dungeons, creepy crypts, and evil abbies. In addition, you interact with other online players and with computer-generated monsters. You can choose whether or not you want to be involved in Player vs. Player (PvP) competition and kill other players (and thus be killed by other players) for the entire game. If you choose this option, you should log in to the +PvP server. If you would rather focus on the role-playing aspects of the game, you can identify yourself as -PvP and log in to a normal game server.



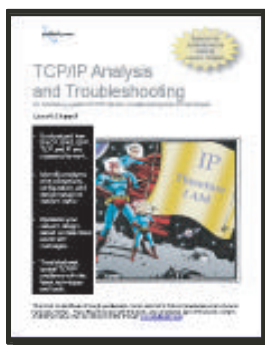
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Product Snapshots

While I was researching the business travel web sites mentioned in the main article, I came across a few new products that may make your next business trip even more productive. (Please note that these are first-look reviews; we have not conducted exhaustive testing.)

EASIDOCK 3000

The EasiDock 3000 from Mobility Electronics enables you to connect standard computer peripherals, including a monitor, to virtually any laptop PC. Most docking systems are designed to work only with the particular system for which it was designed. The EasiDock 3000 uses a proprietary Split Bridge technology to extend the PCI bus to a remote device, up to 15 feet away, with little or no performance degradation or software requirements.

The Split Bridge technology is accomplished by splitting a standard PCI-PCI bridge chip. On one end of the full duplex high-speed serialized link is a Split Bridge chip. This chip is placed in the remote device or docking station. On the other end of the link is the other section of the Split Bridge chip that has been placed on a type II CardBus card. The Split Bridge currently operates at 1.25 Gbps in each direction. The serialized PCI Split Bridge looks no different than a standard PCI-PCI bridge even though the link is through a cable. As a result, the remote device performs as if it is physically connected to the computing device but operates through a cable and CardBus.

To connect your laptop to the docking system, EasiDock includes the following ports:

- Parallel port
- Serial port
- PS/2 keyboard port
- PS/2 mouse port
- 2 USB ports at 12 Mbps bandwidth per port
- Video port
- RJ-45 for 3Com 10/100 Fast Ethernet
- 2 1/2-length PCI slots
- Internal dual EIDE interface

EasiDock 3000 supports Windows 98. In addition, EasiDock 3000 lets you easily add two standard drive bay devices to expand your laptop. You can also add up to two half-length PCI cards, such as modems, high-resolution video cards, or SCSI controllers. The EasiDock 3000E includes integrated 3Com 10/100Mbps Fast Ethernet.

You can find the EverQuest: The Ruins of Kunark online playing community at Sony's The Station web site (<http://www.station.sony.com>). When you join the EverQuest community (U.S. \$9.95 per month), you can choose on which server you would like to play. Each server has its own characteristics, including number of players and game levels.

EverQuest: The Ruins of Kunark supports Windows 98 and 95. (According to

Verant Interactive, EverQuest: The Ruins of Kunark should also run under Windows 2000.) You can purchase the client portion of EverQuest: The Ruins of Kunark through retail channels for the suggested price of U.S. \$39.95. This price includes the client software and the first month of play. For more information about EverQuest: The Ruins of Kunark, visit <http://www.station.sony.com/everquest/kunark>.

For more information or to purchase the EasiDock 3000, visit the EasiDock web site at <http://www.easidock.com>. You can also call 1-800-588-4593 or 1-480-596-0061.

LAPTOP LANE

Although Laptop Lane is not strictly a product (it is actually a service), I think every business traveler should be aware of how they can benefit by using this service. Laptop Lane is a convenient way to work during time that you usually spend at the airport waiting for your next flight to depart. For 38 cents per minute, you have access to a 40-square-foot private work space with 7-foot-high walls and a locking door.

Inside the work space, you can connect your laptop to the power supply to recharge your battery, connect to the modem to retrieve your e-mail messages, or if you have an Ethernet card, you can use the T-1 line. If you need to print a document, simply connect your laptop to the laser printer in the work space or use the Ethernet connection to print to the network color laser printer at the concierge station.

If you left your laptop at home, no problem. Just use the desktop PC in your work space. The desktop PC is equipped with most of the business software you need. In addition, no extra charge is applied for domestic long-distance when you dial direct. At Laptop Lanes, you can also find standard office supplies, such as staplers, paper clips, and copy machines.

Laptop Lanes are popping up around the United States. Laptop Lanes are now located in twelve major airports, and ten other airports have recently announced they will be implementing Laptop Lanes. For more information about Laptop Lane, or to find out which airports have Laptop Lanes, visit <http://www.laptoplane.com>.

LAP LOUNGER

The laptop is designed to facilitate convenient computing. When you are traveling, however, you may often find that juggling your laptop can be awkward. The Lap Lounger fits snugly in your lap and provides stable, comfortable support for your laptop.

In addition, the Lap Lounger lifts the hot surfaces of your laptop off of your legs and positions the laptop at a convenient angle, making your laptop more comfortable to use. When you are not using the Lap Lounger, it folds to fit inside most laptop carrying cases.

The Lap Lounger is available online through <http://www.laplounger.com>. For more information, visit the Lap Lounger web site at <http://www.laplounger.com>. You can also call 1-877-854-1609 or 1-401-322-0769. ●

Thanks to Eric Quigley for introducing me to the world of EverQuest: The Ruins of Kunark. We want to hear about all the cool web sites and games that you know about. Send your review of a great web site, network resource, game, or new product to editors@nwconnection.com. If we print your review, you'll become instantly famous, just like Phillip Rasmussen and Eric Quigley. In addition, we'll send you a free NetWare Connection T-shirt. ●